

**To:** Council  
**Date:** 25 July 2016  
**Title of Report:** Questions on Notice from members of Council and responses from the Board Members and Leader, republished after the meeting to include supplementary questions and responses.

## Introduction

1. Questions submitted by members of Council to the Board members, Leader of the Council, by the deadline in the Constitution are listed below in the order they were taken at the meeting.
2. Responses are included.
3. Questioners can ask one supplementary question of the councillor answering the original question.
4. This report is republished as part of the minutes pack after the Council meeting and includes supplementary questions and responses asked and given at the meeting.
5. Unfamiliar terms not explained in the text are briefly explained in footnotes.

## Questions and responses

### Board member for a Clean and Green Oxford

#### 1. From Councillor Pressel to Councillor Tanner

The new junction at George St/Hythe Bridge St, as well as being dangerous for cyclists and unfriendly to pedestrians, is causing very lengthy tailbacks at many times of the day in Beaumont St and Walton St. The County Council is dragging its heels quite frustratingly on finding a solution for this problem (unitary status can't come too soon).

Since many people live on Walton St, please can we consider monitoring the air quality in this street, so that we can gauge the effect of the standing traffic on residents' health?

#### Written Response

We currently monitor air quality in close proximity to Walton Street; on Worcester Street, George Street, Hythe Bridge Street, Beaumont Street and the corner of Worcester Street and Park End Street. The results of the monitoring from the last five years are shown below. As can be seen below, measurements show a mix of increases and decreases in the annual mean. It is not possible to directly associate this with the changes to the junction, as air quality is impacted by conditions such as wind and

temperature. It is however not possible either to rule out that junction changes are having an impact on air quality.

Overall ten year trends from our data collection and analysis show that nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) levels have dropped by typically 35% at roadsides in the city centre.

Site Name	Monitoring Type	Valid Data Capture for Monitoring Period (%) <sup>(1)</sup>	Valid Data Capture 2015 (%) <sup>(2)</sup>	NO <sub>2</sub> Annual Mean Concentration (µg/m <sup>3</sup> ) <sup>(3)</sup>				
				2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Hythe Bridge Street	Diffusion Tube	92	92	60	53	43	42	36
Worcester Street	Diffusion Tube	83	83	66	64	54	52	50
Beaumont Street	Diffusion Tube	92	92	57	49	42	43	44
George Street	Diffusion Tube	83	83	80	66	58	54	61
Park End Street	Diffusion Tube	100	100	58	55	55	42	48

In 2015 we increased the number of diffusion tube monitoring locations in the city by nearly 50% and this increased level of monitoring will continue in 2016/17.

Monitoring locations are chosen on an annual basis. We are currently exposing 75 diffusion tubes for twelve months of the year. Approximately half of this number are deployed within central Oxford at locations where we believe relevant exposure is most likely to be significant. The remainder are used outside of the central area, again being prioritised by locations where relevant exposure is most likely.

Practically speaking we cannot monitor at every location on a continuous basis. To make most efficient use of our resources we rotate a number of monitoring sites every year, ensuring such sites are covered on average every 2 to 3 years. As pollution levels are generally falling, the numbers of hot-spot locations are also falling, enabling us to return to these sites on a more frequent basis.

Walton Street will be considered for specific air quality monitoring when we draw up the schedule for 2017.

The attached briefing note sets out how we decide where to monitor.

## 2. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Tanner

Will the councillor join me in regretting the symbolism inherent in the abolition of the Department of Energy and Climate Change, and in hoping that this does not prove part of the ongoing narrative of Conservative governments continually and successively downgrading the commitment to green issues (scrapping subsidies for wind farms, cancelling the Green Deal), and generally unpicking the hard-earned achievements of Ed Davey in the coalition?

Will he reaffirm Oxford's commitment to the aims of the Paris climate change agreement, whether or not it remains legally binding on the UK?

### Written Response

Yes

## Board member for Community Safety

### 3. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Sinclair

In order to help monitor the effective progress of the use of Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs), will the board member inform council how many occasions the city centre order has led to enforcement action under the following circumstances:

- North of St Giles Church
- inside University Parks
- inside any other property owned and managed by the University of Oxford
- inside the grounds of a college of the university

#### **Written Response**

The purpose of the PSPO has always been to set out minimum standards of behaviour when entering an area with the aim to challenge inappropriate behaviour and change culture over time. With the emphasis being on information and advice we have always expected a high degree of compliance. This is mostly achieved by use of the advice sheets that we have around begging, busking and peddling. Over 200 advice sheets have been given out to people since the introduction of the PSPO in Feb 2016, and one fixed penalty issued. The vast majority of these are issued in Cornmarket Street and surrounding streets.

The arrangement agreed with the University and colleges is that incidents are referred to the University security service to deal with first, some of which have been relevant to the PSPO. If the University or Colleges wish for additional support under the PSPO they will contact the council. Officers regularly meet with the University security service to discuss incidents affecting their land and buildings. This information exchange keeps the environment clean and safe and is a successful example of multi-agency working.

I believe that the situation in the city centre has improved since the PSPO was introduced and that there is much less tension in the area around the competing needs and views of the various stakeholders and individuals.

#### **Supplementary question**

Please can we see the agreement with the University, and is the scope of the PSPO too wide?

#### **Response**

I will check if one is available and give a written response. University land was included because of the potential for the displacement of problem behaviour onto their land.

### 4. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Sinclair

Phase 1 of the City's consultation on the proposed Waterways Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) is now underway.

However there is no protection built in to the projected PSPO for everyday boating activities, whereas similar alleged breaches by land-based residents (e.g. production of smoke, noise or fumes) can only be prosecuted if Environmental Health levels are exceeded. The proposed test in the draft PSPO of 'reasonable grounds for annoyance'

is subjective and would be difficult to prove to the high standard required by a Court if a prosecution were to be attempted.

Can Councillor Sinclair confirm that the same rules will be applied to boating residents as to land-based residents of this City?

### **Written Response**

First of all I should point out that the draft PSPO which forms the basis of preliminary engagement applies to everyone in the areas defined as the Waterways. Some of the issues could clearly relate to users of the waterways areas other than boaters. It is therefore unhelpful to characterise this as an exercise of targeting boaters and their way of life. In phase 1 we have had some constructive meetings with representatives of the boaters and I have reassured them of this point. We are starting to discuss with them alternative methods of dealing with some of the acute problems that the draft PSPO is aimed at. I want to give sufficient time for these discussions to come to fruition and have asked officers to engage positively with this and to report back to me. In order that sufficient time is given to progress this work I am proposing that we review the position in six months' time.

In terms of prosecution – it is the Council's Enforcement Policy and the Home Office Guidance which set out where and when it is appropriate to use prosecution powers. You will have seen in my answer regarding the city centre PSPO that enforcement action is the exception rather than the rule.

### **Supplementary question**

Can we stop work on this Order and can environmental health officers prepare a report after surveying the waterways to accurately assess nuisance?

### **Response**

We are looking at alternative ways of resolving the problems but it is not just the boating community who will be affected by the introduction of a PSPO.

## **Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services**

### **5. From Councillor Fooks to Councillor Brown**

The City Council resolved in 2009 that all employees, contractors, temporary staff and agency workers should be paid the Oxford Living Wage. Can you assure Council that all contractors working for the City Council are being paid the Oxford living wage?

### **Written Response**

The council first started down the path of becoming a Living Wage employer after a motion to council in 2007 from my successor (and predecessor) as a ward councillor for Churchill, Dr Joe McManners.

In 2009, following a Council Motion the City Executive Board approved proposals for an Oxford Living Wage.

At the City Executive Board in December 2011 the Council resolved to encourage contractors to adopt a similar position, and also wrote to local employers to encourage them in the same vein.

The Council's standard business terms and conditions encourage a contractor to '*make all reasonable endeavours to ensure that it complies with all such "living wage" requirements as specified by the Council from time to time .....in relation to all of its employees or representatives so engaged*'

Contractors are therefore strongly encouraged to pay the Oxford Living Wage.

### **Supplementary question**

Are there any checks on our contractors' compliance on paying the Oxford Living Wage?

### **Response**

I will provide a written answer.

## **6. From Councillor Fooks to Councillor Brown**

City Council staff are working very hard to meet targets and improve performance. Is the Council ensuring that staff are not put under excessive stress, which can lead to an increase in sickness absence, particularly among those in Direct Services? Can Council be given the figures over the last three years, by service area, please?

### **Written Response**

Oxford City Council believes that a healthy and productive workforce best serves the Council and the City's residents. High attendance rates have a positive impact on the quality of the services we provide to the public, on work colleagues and facilitate value for money for council tax payers. We aim to promote a culture of attendance through fair, consistent and effective management of sickness absence. Since 2008/09 we have reduced the average days' sickness per employee as an organisation from 12.56 days to 6.81 days at the end of March 2016.

All managers are trained in accordance with the Council's attendance management policy. They will hold return to work interviews and follow up meetings with staff after absences as required, know the importance of keeping in touch with staff experiencing extended illnesses, etc. The policy aim is to support colleagues in returning to work as soon as possible. Managers make sure suitable adjustments are in place to assist return where necessary and help staff work through issues to enable them to remain in work.

There are a number of support mechanisms in place to assist staff.

The occupational health referral scheme that has access to a wide range of specialist advice and supports people back into work in a managed way:

Sick pay provision for staff who unfortunately find themselves with a long term illness.

Optum, the Council's Employee Assistance Programme which offers a confidential advice service available 24/7 and expert counselling covering a wide range of situations including family issues, money management, personal crisis, and illness.

The staff attendance management information for the current and past three years is shown below. The table shows the average number of full time equivalent (FTE) days lost per employee in each area from 2103/14 to date. It also shows the percentage of the total workforce that each area represents.

Oxford City compares favourably to local government sector benchmark averages of 7.5 days per employee.

SERVICE AREA	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17 (project ed)	Approx % of total workfor ce (2016/17 )
<b>ALL EMPLOYEES</b>	7.9	7.09	6.81	6.96	<b>100</b>
<b>Community Services Directorate (excl Direct Services)</b>	3.49	3.81	2.60	2.35	<b>11</b>
<b>Direct Services</b>	10.52	9.26	8.77	9.80	<b>51</b>
<b>OD &amp; Corporate Services Directorate</b>	7.29	6.68	5.51	4.56	<b>23</b>
<b>Regeneration &amp; Housing Directorate</b>	5.93	4.64	5.25	4.65	<b>14</b>
<b>Senior Management and Asst Chief Exec</b>	0.00	1.00	1.54	0.00	<b>1</b>

\*Although absence levels have reduced significantly at Direct Services, they remain higher than the rest of the Council. This is to be expected given the nature of the work and the working conditions. Direct Services have a robust process in place for managing sickness absence, using their HR Business Partner and the services of Occupational Health to help support the employee back to work at the earliest opportunity.

### **Supplementary question**

What steps are being taken to reduce the upward trend in Direct Services?

### **Response**

I will provide a written answer.

## **Board member for Housing**

### **7. From Councillor Goff to Councillor Rowley**

Would the Board member agree that it would be a good idea to consider loft extensions as a way of increasing larger social housing accommodation?

### **Written Response**

As part of the Council's asset management strategy the Council does identify opportunities for extending or modifying homes where there is potential. There is a range of projects in progress, which includes loft extensions. The use of loft extensions does depend on the type of housing and the accommodation it creates, and not all structures are suitable. The potential impact of the Bedroom Tax can also make such development less attractive.

## **8. From Councillor Goff to Councillor Rowley**

A survey of tenants and residents satisfaction (STAR) report in 2015 is based on only a 19% response.

Is this

- (i) acceptable?
- (ii) a true indicator on which to draw conclusions and influence future work programmes?

And what steps are being taken to improve such consultation?

### **Written Response**

(i) The response rate is lower than we would wish and this follows additional work by the survey company to raise the response rate. The survey follows a national standard methodology, and we understand that response rates to this survey have fallen across the country. A reason for the low response rate is that the City Council undertakes this survey every year, whilst many social landlords undertake this survey every three or five years. Some landlords have discontinued the survey.

(ii) The City Council relies on a range of engagement with residents and tenants to inform its work programmes, and the STAR survey is only a small part of this. The City Council is one of only three Local Authority landlords who have achieved accreditation with the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) and is seen as a leading Council in this respect. The Council uses our Tenant Scrutiny Panel extensively. We also have a range of tenant groups and local consultations which focus on solutions for specific issues (in a format known as Appreciative Enquiry), where tenants bring their own experience to inform future work programmes. In common with other landlords the Council already places increasing emphasis on this approach rather than general surveys.

### **Supplementary question**

Are there any additional steps to improve the consultation?

### **Response**

These are set out in the response. The Tenants' Panel is also consulted and officers find their responses and views helpful.

## **Board member for Leisure, Parks and Sport**

## **9. From Councillor Fooks to Councillor Smith**

Given the current concern about obesity and unhealthy eating, will you be asking Fusion Leisure to restrict the products in their vending machines to healthy snacks rather than chocolate and sweets?

### **Written Response**

It's important that there are healthy options when it comes to food and drink in our leisure centres and we are currently working with Fusion on a trial of vending machines stocked only with healthy choices at the Leys Pools and Leisure Centre and at the new gym at Oxford Spires Academy. If the trial scheme is successful we will expect it to be rolled out to other facilities.

### **Supplementary question**

When will the report from the trial scheme be available?

### **Response**

I will provide a written answer.

## **Board member for Planning and Regulatory Services**

### **10. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Hollingsworth**

I note that the all-day weekday parking permits for Oxpens for £6 must be ordered online via the Council's website, can the Lead Member please let us know what other ways to book permits are available for those who do not have internet access?

### **Written Response**

The offer is only available for customers that purchase the permit online via the council's website. This model is very similar to those adopted across e-commerce and encourages customers to use a particular platform that provides a benefit for the provider and receiver. Additional staffing resources were not required to support initiative, as the system processes the order. That having been said, if a customer was not able to access the internet via their home, work or smartphone, they could utilise the computers located on the ground floor of the Council offices at St Aldates Chambers

It should be noted the Office for National Statistics stated in August 2015 that 86% of the population had access to the internet, with the figure rising year on year. In addition, it has been estimated that 45 million people in the UK own a smartphone. Once these figures have been considered, the Council is confident that the offer is open to the vast majority of customers. .

### **Supplementary question**

Could customer services staff make bookings for people who are unable to use a computer themselves?

### **Response**

I will provide a written response.

### **11. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Hollingsworth**

I note the Lead Member's decision to introduce pre-paid weekday all-day parking permits for £6 in Oxpens Car Park because of under-capacity due in part to continuing works.

Can the Lead Member please indicate what percentage of under-capacity of city-owned car parks triggers the reduction of parking tariffs?

### **Written Response**

During the Westgate building works the Oxpens car park has not been full during the day on weekdays. After careful consideration, the Council introduced all day permits available for advance purchase for use during those hours. The price was carefully



calibrated to attract cars already parking in other city centre locations, such as Gloucester Green where usage has increased and where the car park is full on most days, rather than to bring new traffic into the city centre. It is hoped that the promotional offer will help to reduce congestion in Gloucester Street, for example. There is no percentage threshold, and each car park's tariffs are considered on a case by case basis. Meetings are held regularly to ensure the city's car parks are well utilised. If either under used capacity or excess demand is identified at a particular site, officers investigate and may propose measures to address the issue.

## **12. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hollingsworth**

Can the Board Member for Planning advise when the North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area (Novsca) Appraisal, promised by its author for January 2016, will become available?

### **Written Response**

The task of completing the North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area appraisal was given to an external contractor, someone well-known in this relatively small and tight-knit professional field, and someone who came with excellent references. The terms of the contract were such that payment would be made upon delivery of the completed appraisal. Despite giving regular assurances that the project was progressing, and despite being granted further time to complete the work, the contractor has failed to deliver the appraisal. The contractor has now told Council officers that he has faced particular issues, but has not offered any further explanation or any plausible schedule for delivery of the required reports. As a result the contract has been terminated forthwith, and no payment whatsoever has been or will be made. A new contractor will be appointed shortly. This is an extremely disappointing situation, and the new contractor will be managed extremely closely to ensure timely delivery of a suitable final appraisal.

### **Supplementary question**

The delay is becoming disastrous because of the impact on the Local Plan development and other planning policy documents. What has happened about the contractor's other work with the Council?

### **Response**

The contractor has no other commitments with the Council in any capacity and we will be very careful with subsequent appointments for this work.

## **13. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Hollingsworth**

This month's Planning Committees' list of appeals showed that three applications had been appealed on grounds of non-determination.

Can the Lead Member please give the numbers of appeals for non-determination over the past 5 years, and is he able to give an assurance that procedures are now in place to ensure that applications will be determined within statutory timeframe in the event that case officers are off sick?

### **Written Response**

Over the past 5 years a total of 13 appeals have been lodged against the Council on the grounds of non-determination. This includes the 3 referred to by Cllr Wilkinson referenced in the July West and East Planning Committee agendas. The 3 appeals are linked in that they are for one site and for the same applicant. For information (but not directly comparable data) there have been 48 appeals lodged in the 12 months between June 2015 and May 2016

In order to ensure applications are dealt with within the statutory timeframe the Planning & Regulatory Service has been putting in place a number of actions to improve the performance and quality of the service. This includes a greater focus on and use of performance management information to manage individual officers caseloads and ensure statutory targets are met, minimising the risk of appeals being lodged on grounds of non-determination. In respect of the 3 appeals referred to the cases were reassigned but the officer to whom they were assigned failed to deal with them. That officer no longer works for the Council.

### **14. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Hollingsworth**

Would the Lead Member please indicate how many B56 planning applications have been made since the relevant legislation was passed to bring office space into use as residential accommodation, bearing in mind initial speculation when legislation was passed that there would only be six or seven across the whole country?

### **Written Response**

The 'prior approval' system introduced from 30 May 2013 by the Coalition Government allows the change of use from use class B1a (office) to use class C3 (residential) without the need for full planning permission. Whilst developers must seek prior approval from the City Council to undertake the change of use, the ONLY issues that can be considered are flooding, land contamination, highways and transport.

This means that these applications cannot be assessed against the full range of policies in Oxford's Local Plan and our usual policy requirements, such as affordable housing and energy efficiency, cannot be applied. In 2014/15 this meant that Oxford missed out on approximately 32 affordable homes that would normally have been sought if Local Plan policies were applied. We were also unable to secure any financial contributions towards affordable housing from smaller B56 applications during this period.

To date we have received 47 B56 prior approval applications, the outcomes of which are shown below:

- Prior approval required and granted 28
- Prior approval required and refused 7
- Prior approval not required 5
- Application withdrawn 4
- Application pending consideration 3

### **Supplementary question**

Is my understanding correct that there is no power to require adequate amenity space on these developments?

### **Response**

Yes, this is one of the many reasons this policy was poorly thought out, and we continue to press government ministers for a change in policy.

### **15. From Councillor Fooks to Councillor Hollingsworth**

The new Local Plan 2036 will be a very important document, taking the city forward for the next twenty years. There has been very limited publicity of this consultation. Local groups and community associations will want to discuss their responses to the consultation at their meetings, which often take place only monthly or even less frequently. Ending the consultation period on August 5th will mean that many groups will not have had time to meet and discuss and respond.

Would you consider extending the deadline for another two weeks at least to allow more time for more people to submit their views on this key document?

### **Written Response**

Unfortunately the councillor has misunderstood the nature and scope of the current period of consultation. The Local Plan 2036 process is currently timetabled to take a little over three years to complete, with three different periods of consultation taking place, one each year. The consultation in year two will be on the City Council's preferred options, and the consultation in year three will be on the final document. The consultation this year – which is not statutorily required but which I regard as a very important part of the process – takes the form of consultation with all the community groups and other consultees with whom the City Council is in regular contact AND additional events where officers can meet members of the public in an informal environment to get their views on what challenges the city faces and therefore what the priorities for the 2036 Local Plan ought to be.

Community associations and amenity groups, as well as others with an interest in the development of the new Local Plan, will continue to have access to officers to influence the shape of the emerging policies throughout the three years of the Plan-making process. Any input from them will be considered and form part of the process, whether it is received before or after 5th August. Residents associations and amenity groups were contacted directly two weeks before the start of the consultation specifically so that they would have an opportunity to schedule in to their meetings discussions about the consultation, if they so wished.

Finally, I would disagree with the suggestion that there has been limited publicity of this consultation. There have been weekly stories in the local press – both in print and on radio and television – over the last few weeks, as well as adverts in the Oxford Mail and Oxfordshire Guardian, and an advert on the online version of the Oxford Mail is running for the length of the consultation. A piece was included in Your Oxford, which is delivered to every household in the city. Videos that I made to promote the consultation have been viewed more than 80,000 times by just under 30,000 different individuals, and together with other Tweets and Facebook messages we have so far reached more than 33,000 different people; by the end of the consultation period we expect that figure

to exceed 50,000. So far more than 1300 of those viewers have followed the link to the consultation pages on our website.

Leaflets and posters have backed up the media campaign and are distributed in public locations around the city, such as community centres, libraries and leisure centres. Many of the 174 residents and amenity groups directly notified of the consultation have spread the word to members of their groups and have requested extra leaflets to give out. We also sent out about 1500 direct notifications to those on our database.

### **Supplementary question**

Why was north Oxford omitted from the original list of consultation stops and added at the last minute?

### **Response**

A clerical error in compiling the original list resulted in omitting Summertown. This was rectified.

## **16. From Councillor Fooks to Councillor Hollingsworth**

A resident rang the Out-of-Hours number recently because of noise nuisance, had to wait for 40 minutes for the phone to be answered, then was told there was nothing that could be done.

Would you agree that this is a very unsatisfactory service, not to say an unacceptable one?

### **Written Response**

Officers believe that this question refers to a complaint about the ongoing roadworks at Wolvercote Roundabout which the Duty Officer was unable to resolve on the night in question. The following evening the Duty Officer attended the site twice at different times and found on both occasions that the works were adhering to the consent conditions. With a limited number of officers, it is not always possible to attend every location immediately, nor are all complaints suitable for attendance on the night. The case notes and phone logs do not suggest that there was a 40 minute wait for the call to be answered, so if the Councillor could pass on more details to the relevant officers that aspect of the question will be investigated further.

## **17. From Councillor Fooks to Councillor Hollingsworth**

Given the high number of people now renting rather than owning their homes, it is clearly ever more important that these homes meet at least minimum standards of safety and suitability. It is also very important that landlords are encouraged to accommodate people on benefits as well as those able to pay themselves. The response rate to the consultation on the proposed Private Sector Housing policy was lamentable – only 58 responses which cannot be considered remotely representative or a sound basis from which to draw conclusions.

Would you consider reviewing the methods used and acknowledge that not all landlords were contacted, making the reported findings totally unfit for use?

### **Written Response**

This issue was discussed at the CEB, and while having a higher rate of response can always be helpful, I do not agree at all that the response rate was lamentable, nor that the findings are in any way unfit for use. The consultation process for the Policy closely mirrored that which was used for the renewal of the HMO Licensing scheme, so there can be no doubt that landlords and agents were provided with ample opportunity to respond should they have chosen to do so. As the report to CEB made clear, any extension of the current HMO licensing scheme to other parts of the private rented sector will require further reports, legal advice and another consultation.

### **Supplementary question**

How did you identify the landlords to contact and how were these selected?

### **Response**

I will provide a written answer.

## **18. From Councillor Gant to Councillors Hollingsworth and Price**

Would the Leader give council an update on the delivery of OxPens and the appointment of the developer partner with the Joint Venture (company), and his assessment of whether Brexit materially affects prospects for the future occupancy of the site and, as a result, the council's exposure to risk?

### **Written Response**

Oxford West End Developments Ltd has appointed a consortium of JLL and Bidwells to act as its development advisor. Current activity is focussed on developing the strategy and timing for procurement of a developer partner which it is anticipated will be undertaken by Spring 2017 with a view to starting on site in 2018. Much of the recent hiatus in the property market has been caused by the uncertainty around the question of the nature of Brexit and the consequential impacts. We should know the answer to this question or at least have a much better idea by the time we are looking for occupiers. In any event given the tight supply of City Centre land, a healthy local residential market with no sign of oversupply, and a commercial market not overly dependent on financial services I think it unlikely that Brexit will materially and detrimentally affect occupancy.

## **19. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Hollingsworth**

Can the Leader please give an update on a code of practice for estate agents and letting agents in the City?

### **Written Response**

Officers from Planning and Regulatory Services have held several meetings with agents to explore the issues and the possibilities of introducing a voluntary code of practice regarding letting boards.

It was clear that there was some appetite for using fewer boards and even creating a board-free city, but the agents were all adamant that there must be a level playing field including both letting and estate agents that is strictly enforced before they are prepared to take part.

At present the Council does not have the planning enforcement capacity to proactively enforce a voluntary code of practice, but once the restructure of Planning and Regulatory Services has bedded in we will revisit priorities and consider whether there is any merit in pursuing a voluntary code of practice.

### **Supplementary question**

What is the timetable for this review and which committee or body will see the final report?

### **Response**

I would like this completed by the end of this municipal year. The committee which will see this will be determined by the content and recommendations of the report.

## **Leader of the Council, Board Member for Corporate Strategy and Economic Development**

### **20. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Price**

At the time of writing (Friday 15 July), has the Executive seen the PWC report? If so, why haven't other members seen it, given that it is a publicly-funded document, not an internal one? If by the date of this council meeting the report has been released to members, is it in its full original form, and if not, why not?

### **Written Response**

The work on the PwC report is largely complete but is still to be finalised following discussions and feedback from civil servants. It has not therefore been shared with the Executive. DCLG have encouraged the city, districts and county to work together to explore the possibilities of a way forward that would command broad agreement. The city, districts and county have agreed to postpone publication of the studies that have been commissioned, and pause plans for consultation on proposals until a joint approach has been considered. A statement to that effect was jointly issued on 19th July.

### **Supplementary question**

The report remains relevant whatever the outcome so would it not be sensible to release it to the public sooner rather than later?

### **Response**

I agree it should be published, as should the separate report commissioned by the County Council. It would be best for all Oxfordshire's local authorities to review both together and see what can be drawn from both. This is best achieved by publishing both reports at the same time rather than one in advance of the other.

### **21. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Price**

Would the leader give us a brief update of his most recent dealings with DCLG over devolution and local government reorganisation in the light of the change of government and Secretary of State?

### **Written Response**

Officers have met senior civil servants who have encouraged both tiers of Local Government in Oxfordshire to explore the possibilities of finding a joint approach. We have agreed with the County Council to a short period of informal purdah whilst options are explored. Currently this work is being undertaken at an officer's level and further discussions with government are planned. When options have been identified council leaders will want to discuss these and consult widely. The Secretary of State has only been in post for a matter of days and we would encourage him to redouble the government's commitment to working with local authorities on devolution and for government to be less prescriptive in terms of structures and in particular requirements to have an elected mayor.

### **22. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Price**

Will the Leader join me in echoing calls from the LGA for representatives of local government to be involved in forthcoming negotiations with the European Union from the outset and at the highest level, in order to safeguard links between local authorities and our European partners and visitors?

### **Written Response**

Yes.

### **23. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Price**

Will the leader set up a Working group to monitor the practical impact of Brexit on Oxford and its economy and explore ground for mitigating those effects, including representatives of industry, tourism, academia, education, the NHS, the construction and property sectors, and others?

### **Written Response**

That would be premature until Article 50 is triggered and the approach that is being taken by the Government to the negotiation of a new treaty is clear.

### **Supplementary question**

Should we try to get 'ahead of the curve' on working on mitigating the impacts?

### **Response**

I will ask the Leader for a written response.

### **24. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Price**

Will the leader write to our friends in our Twin cities within the EU reminding them that the people of Oxford voted overwhelmingly to Remain, and that they remain welcome here?

### **Written Response**

As Councillor Gant knows, this was done

## **25. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Price**

Will the Leader join me in reassuring our many European visitors, tourists and business people that we have shared values, and a shared European cultural heritage, and that we welcome them here with great pleasure and friendship - and will demonstrate this by creating a new logo for the city: 'Oxford - a proud European city'

### **Written Response**

Yes to the first part of the question. No to the second: a new logo would need serious consideration in relation to cost and use. I am happy to undertake that consideration on a cross party basis over the next few months.

### **Supplementary question**

Can we publicise this message as soon as possible and as widely as possible?

### **Response**

I agree with the sentiment but we have to be careful that we do not inadvertently make one group feel less welcome by emphasising our welcome of another. We wish to welcome all our many visitors and residents.

## **26. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Price**

Will the leader inform council of any initiatives to work with Cambridge and other university cities to protect the vital interests of academics against the effects of Brexit, in terms of funding, free movement, and general ongoing uncertainty?

### **Written Response**

Universities UK is already involved in discussions with the government on all these issues and the City Council will contribute to them as necessary and appropriate during the negotiating period.

## **27. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Price**

A draft of a message issued by the Leader immediately after the EU referendum began by stating that "all members" of Oxford City Council regretted the result. The final published version omitted the reference to "all members". Can the Leader explain this change of wording?

### **Written Response**

I can't recall why it was changed - probably because I felt that the text flowed with greater elegance, but Cllr Gant can rest assured that there was no implication about a lack of unanimity in Council- as evidenced by the vote at our last meeting.